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Alfred Vogel (1902–1996) as an example of the development of non-physician naturopathy – especially phytotherapy – in Switzerland

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On the background of the results of biographic and historical research about ALFRED VOGEL [1,2], the collected data are being put in context with aspects of his personal and professional socialisation as well as social movements which seem to have influenced his professional career from being a salesman to become a well-known non-physician therapist (i.e. naturopath) in Switzerland in the 20th century.

Family Socialisation

Born in 1902 into modest circumstances in Aesch near Basel, Alfred Max Vogel became aware of medicinal herbs already in his childhood. The knowledge of folk medicine was passed down to him by his father (Fig. 1)¹ and his grandmother who showed the locally growing medicinal plants to him on walks through the countryside, let him taste them and explained their healing character [3]. He said later that the collection of plants in the attic of his parents' house was like a "pharmacy of medicinal herbs" which "captured (his) complete and unshakeable trust" in the "healing power of herbs" that never had been disappointed [4]. From this retrospective but clear statement it can be deduced that it was a rather informal pattern of family socialisation in terms of oral tradition that arose the interest in herbal medicine in the young Vogel. However, after his school education in Therwil, he received a business training and since 1923 he had been working in the "Kolonialhaus Helios" in Basel [1] of

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Key words: naturopath, life reform, complementary and alternative medicine, fresh plant extract, herbal medicine, history of medicine

Alfred Vogel (1902–1996) als Beispiel für die Entwicklung der nicht-ärztlichen Naturheilkunde – besonders der Phytotherapie – in der Schweiz

Basierend auf biographischen Daten über den Schweizer Alfred Vogel werden sozial-kulturelle Aspekte beleuchtet, die einen Teil des Hintergrunds seines Werdegangs zum Naturarzt bilden. Im Rahmen der Familiensozialisation wird er als Kind auf den volksheilkundlichen Gebrauch von Heilpflanzen aufmerksam. Nach einer kaufmännischen Ausbildung arbeitet er als Verkäufer in einem Kolonialwarengeschäft bei Basel, das er in ein Reformhaus umwandelt, nachdem er der Besitzer wird. Der Geschäftserfolg bildet die finanzielle Grundlage für eine neue berufliche Orientierung. Er popularisiert lebensreformerische Ideen in eigenen Büchern und Zeitschriften, besucht Ausbildungskurse in Naturheilkunde, lässt sich als Naturarzt registrieren und betreibt ein Kurhaus bei St. Gallen. Seine tiefe Religiosität formt sein Weltbild und seine therapeutische Ausrichtung. Er beginnt Frischpflanzenpräparate in einem kleinen Labor herzustellen, welches er entsprechend der Nachfrage fortlaufend vergrößert. Neben seiner therapeutischen und journalistischen Tätigkeit bereist er verschiedene Länder, was teilweise den Charakter von ethnobotanischen Exkursionen annimmt, und kommt mit neuen Erkenntnissen, Pflanzen oder Früchten zurück, die er für seine Pflanzenzubereitungen oder Produkte verwendet. Schliesslich konzentriert er sich ab 1963 in einer modernen Firma (Bioforce AG) auf die Herstellung von pflanzlichen Arznei- und Heilmitteln und wird einer der wichtigen Protagonisten der Phytotherapie in der Schweiz.

Schlüsselwörter: Naturarzt, Lebensreform, Naturheilkunde, Frischpflanzenextrakt, Phytotherapie, Medizingeschichte

which he became the owner soon after. Beside classic colonial goods such as cane sugar and Ceylon tea, his range of goods also included herbal cosmetic and health products like arnica soap, birch and melissa balsam, essences of juniper, peppermint or camomile, essential oils (e.g. *Oleum menthae jap.*)

and medicinal teas (e.g. Alpine plantain, rose hip seeds, Icelandic moss, and white clover flowers). This orientation towards "health products" is also expressed in the name he finally chose for his store [1]: "Reformhaus Vogel" (Reform Shop Vogel; Fig. 2).²



Fig. 1. A. Vogel, third from the right, with his older siblings and parents (1920s).



Fig. 2. Advertisement for the “Reformhaus A. Vogel” (Reform Shop A. Vogel) in Basel (1924).

Commercial basis and life reform movement

Vogel did not restrict his range of goods to those named above. Already since 1924, he had been developing and selling products under his own brand name “AVOBA” (A. Vogel, Basel; e.g. ‘Avoba Porridge Oats’, ‘Avoba Fig Syrup’, ‘Avoba Raw Rice’, ‘Avoba Banana Cacao’ but also ‘Avoba Coffee’ or ‘Avoba Shampoo’; Fig 3)³.

At this time, Vogel’s main interest was in the field of nutrition as can be

seen from these products as well as from his first publication, (i.e. “Kleiner Wegweiser für Lebensreform”, *A Small Guide To Life Reform*, 1926; Fig. 4) [5]. In the guide, he described himself as a “nutritional therapist” and warned of the “modern food industry”, in which he saw the “ghost of the 20th century” who claims its “victims” everywhere [ibid., page 5]. He explained that the “chemical-mechanical preparation processes” used in this industry robs the food its “vitamins and ... completeness”. He therefore advised to “go back to nature”. Yet, Vogel’s own interpretation of this pragmatic phrase was above all the return “to pure, unadulterated natural products [that is for example] ... to wholemeal bread, wholemeal pasta products, whole rice ..., unrefined brown cane sugar containing calcium and iron” [ibid., page 7]. His conviction of the necessity of “natural nutrition” was based on eating “natural products in a form as close to their original state as possible” and in this context he also spoke of “wholesomeness” [ibid., page 15, 20] or “whole-

some food” [6] and even referred to vitamins. Vogel assured his readers that he did not offer products from “grasping money-minded people” and that he had convinced himself of the quality and credibility of his own Avoba production and of the reform manufacturers whose general agency in Switzerland he had got (e.g. Sanitas Bread, Eden Tea, Frugella Strength Soup) [5].

It is striking that Vogel combined several aspects in the argumentation for his products for the “pure and natural”: aspects of the Rousseauian romanticism world-view from the 18th century, life reform⁴ ideas of the 19th and latest scientific discoveries of the 20th century (e.g. vitamins have only been discovered in 1912).

Above all, Vogel was in line with goals of the informal social protest



Fig. 3. Advertisement for “Avoba Products” 1928.

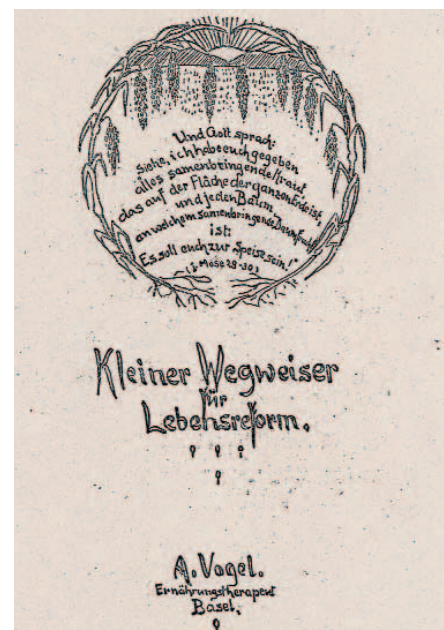


Fig. 4. Title page of Vogel’s first publication of “Kleiner Wegweiser für Lebensreform” (*Small Guide To Life Reform*) (1926).

¹ Alfred Vogel Museum, Teufen.

² Archive A. Vogel GmbH, Teufen (AAVGT): book of advertisements, advertisement from the newspaper “Baselstab” dated 26.05.1924.

³ AAVGT: book of advertisements, advertisement from the newspaper “Volksgesundheit” (*Public Health*) dated 01.08.1928

⁴ The term “Lebensreform” (*life reform*) already appears in the subtitle of a magazine appearing for the first time in Dresden in 1890, “Die Volksgesundheit”, Monatsschrift der Arbeitervereine für Gesundheitspflege, Lebensreform, Freikörperkultur, Heilkunde und Kleingartenwesen im Verband Volksgesundheit” (*The Public Health. Monthly Magazine of the Worker’s Associations for Health Care, Life Reform, Naturism, Medicine and Allotment Gardening in the Association for Public Health*).

movements which grew in some European countries from the end of the 19th century – called “Lebensreformbewegung” (life reform movement) [7]. The movement called for a simpler, more natural life in the face of urbanisation and its effect on daily life due to industrialisation (e.g. food reform, earth reform) [8]. Yet, the ideological orientations of the movement were diverse (e.g. romantic, religious, naturalistic, health-oriented, folkish or even racist) and the realisation of its goals varied broadly between its protagonists and fellows (e.g. the rather anarchistic reform colony at Monte Verita/Ascona in Switzerland or the rather moderate one in Eden/Berlin in Germany) [9]. However, citizens who sympathized with single ideas of the “Lebensreformbewegung” but were bound to traditional family or social patterns could rather become customers of reform shops instead of actively taking part. This enabled them to partly adopt single ideas and to be somehow connected with the movement. So everyday domestic items could be bought alternatively in reform shops instead of common department stores and can therefore be interpreted as one example of a response of a complex and differentiated society to enable pluralism of opinion [10]. Vogel’s reform shop turned into a commercial success. The yearly turnover increased from about CHF 84,000 in 1926/27 to CHF 155,000 in 1928/29. [1] One year later, this virtual doubling of turnover allowed him to rebuild the warehouse of the reform shop in Basel. In the 1930s, he also opened branches of the reform shop in Zurich, Solothurn and Bern and ran two of them until 1963 [1].

Popularisation of life style ideas and educational aspects

From 1926 on, starting with the already mentioned ‘Small Guide To Life Reform’, it was one of Vogel’s declared aims to inform people in order to enable them to “self-help”, which is in part a moti-

vation in the life reform movement [5,11]. The educational aspect in his publications was also emphasised by the co-author and teacher SOPHIE SOMMER (his wife from 1927–1982†) who wrote the foreword for the guide. There she expresses the wish that “this little booklet might ... light the way ... to more robust, stronger health” [12] and “fight the dark powers and their ascent.” This subject recurs again and again in her poems for the guide where the idea to “be victorious” in the everyday “struggle” is a central topic [12,13]. Although the second edition of the guide never came out, probably because the first was published on too large a scale with a run of 25,000 copies, Vogel found another way to put his thoughts into words and to popularise life reform ideas and products on a broader scale.

In 1929, he took up the idea of other life reformers and founded a small publishing house in Basel as well as a magazine, both called “Das Neue Leben” (*The New Life*) [14]. The cover of the magazine is programmatic for the life reform: the well-proportioned human – hardly clothed so that light and air can touch his skin – has just broken the chain of civilisation and faces the sunrise of a new life in harmony with nature (Fig. 5).⁵

Among the subscribers to the magazine were private persons, naturopaths, owners of reform shops, boarding houses and hotels, the “Association for Folk Health” in Bern and the “Associations of Folk Medicine” in Brunn, Zurich and Vienna [1]. During the global economic crisis, Vogel addressed his readers at the beginning of 1932 to let them know that the publication of the magazine had to be ceased. Nevertheless, he referred to the magazine “Der Wendepunkt” (*The Turning Point*) of the Swiss physician BIRCHER-BENNER [15] with which he wanted to merge his own magazine – but this plan was not turned into practice.

But it remained an important task for Vogel to disseminate his knowledge. In 1935, he published his book “Nahrung als Heilungsfaktor” (*Nutrition as Healing Factor*). Then in the 1940s, he was also journalist of “Die Naturheilkunde. Schweizerische Zeitschrift für



Fig. 5. Title page of the first edition of Vogel’s magazine “Das Neue Leben” (*The New Life*) (1929).

naturgemässe Lebens- und Heilweise” (*Naturopathy. Swiss Journal of Natural Living and Healing*) and wrote on subjects like natural remedies, organic farming or biochemical salts. [16,17]

By 1942/43, the successor magazine came out: “Gesundheits-Nachrichten” (*Health News*). They were published on a monthly basis until today but since his death by his second wife Denise.

In 1952, he achieved his greatest success with the book “Der kleine Doktor” (*The Little Doctor*) which has been translated in several languages and is still published today [18]. In it, he managed to write in a simple, affable style and preserved his ties with ordinary people. By turning directly to his readers, he guided them in a comprehensible way through selected aspects of “Swiss folk medicine”, as he put it [19].

Guided by a sense of mission on health topics, Vogel additionally started to give lectures. An excerpt from his calendar from the end of January till the beginning of March 1950 gives an insight view on this engagement. In this period, he spoke 11 times in Austria and Switzerland about “The way nature heals”, “The art of dining”, “How to get and stay healthy using simple and natural means” [20].

⁵ Heimatmuseum Aesch (Local Heritage Museum): A. Vogel Sammlung, “Das Neue Leben” 1 (1929).

Religious world-view and therapeutic work

Already in Vogel's first publications [5,15], the appearance of religious statements is remarkable. For example, a biblical quotation from the first Book of Moses is the motto for the cover of his above mentioned 'Guide on life reform': "And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat." In further statements, he said that "mother nature" ensures that for man – "the creation's crowning glory" – every food product would have the constituents "in the correct proportion" [5, page 6]. This explains the view that for him one of the most important 'natural laws' in the area of food was the consumption of natural products "as close to their original state as possible" (e.g. wholemeal products or uncooked food) [ibid., page 15].

Some years later, he stuck to this view and mixed religious and biological aspects: For him, plants had an important function for people because they would possess a "God-given breath of life". Next to that, they would also have "a biological form", absorb minerals, process them and finally could be taken up by "animal bodies ... [and] humans" [21, page 16]. And again, it would be "God to guarantee" that in natural vegetable food "everything is present in the right amount and in a given complex that alone is correct for" man. [ibid., page 20]. Almost 60 years later, Vogel confirmed that already "as a young person" he had orientated himself by the Story of Creation and that he continued to do so throughout his whole life [22, page 683]. He also derived rules of conduct from this. For example, "disobedience towards the Creator (leads) to death" and "obedience towards the divine and biological laws is life, happiness and joy" [ibid., page 682]. His life was based on the principle: "...he, who knows to do good and does not do it, for him it is a sin." [ibid., page 678]. For Vogel, even "strength ...



Fig. 6. Membership certificate: "Naturopath" in the "Swiss Association of Naturopaths" (NVS) (1933).

and ... duty" [ibid., page 679] came from such an attitude which is combined with the striving to be among the people "Jehovah" [ibid., page 687] will "select for his kingdom" and who will live in an "earthly paradise" freed from all evil. But he did not believe that humans could improve life on earth through their own efforts and through political decisions and, therefore, he was longing for "theocracy" to come [ibid., page 683–685]. In these statements, Vogel showed his affinity with the teachings of Jehovah's Witnesses from which he said to have received the motivation for his path in life.

Activity as lay physician (i.e. naturopath)

In his first years as owner of reform shops, Vogel seemed to have advised his customers about aspects of life reform and naturopathy. Nevertheless, his interest in a therapeutic profession grew. Most probably this motivation together with his religious orientation and the financial success of his business, enabled him to move to the canton of Appenzell in 1932/33 where the legal regulations for naturopathic activities were liberal.

However, his bonds to his reform shops remained strong and formed the financial basis. In the new canton, he even became chairman of the "Reform Shop Society" [1]. Already in 1933, he became member of the NVS, the "Swiss Association of Naturopaths" (*Naturärzte-Vereinigung der Schweiz*) (Fig. 6)⁶. At the NVS, he passed training courses in naturopathy, gave lectures about nutritional therapy and was even instructor of a course [2]. Then in 1933/34, he attended training courses in Switzerland and Southern Germany [ibid.]

At least from 1935 onwards, Vogel started his therapeutic activity in the framework of cure treatments at the "Diät-Kurhaus Vogel" with a "Kinderheim" (*Dietary Spa Hotel Vogel with a Children's Home*) in the village of Trogen near St. Gallen [21, page 134, 252]. The framework in which the guests could recover can be seen from an advertisement (Fig. 7 [21]): For Vogel, the major concern was the change in diet which, due to social reasons, would often be too difficult at home. But he combined "diet cures" with naturopathic measures such as rest, open-air movement, walking and sunbathing and, if necessary, with the use of "naturopathic medicines" [ibid., page 252].

Among the various "naturopathic medicines", plant-based medicines and remedies were very important to Vogel. A course on "the practical manufacturing of the most-often-used naturopathic medicines" at the NVS must have had a substantial impact on him to get into production of natural and herbal remedies (Fig. 8)⁷. There is evidence that in 1935 he set up the "Bioforce Laboratorium" (*Bioforce laboratory*) in Trogen – probably in the spa hotel – and started to produce remedies (Fig. 9 [21]). His advertisements emphasised, above all, the controlled quality of his remedies (e.g. St. John's Wort Oil) [ibid., page 245]. In his laboratory, he did not only produce naturopathic medicines but also "biological cosmetics" and "organic fertilisers" [ibid., page 257].

Yet, at this time, herbal remedies did not play a major role, as can be seen from his second book, this time on nutrition, which was published in his publishing house in the same year:

⁶AAVGT: membership document for NVS from February 1933.

Wenn Sie zuhause nicht kuren können
weil die Küche nicht umgestellt werden kann, weil der Mann oder die Frau, der Onkel oder die Tante dagegen ist oder immer etwas einzuwenden hat, oder weil Sie es selbst nicht übers Herz bringen, ein bisschen konsequent zu sein,

dann kommen Sie zu uns
Hier haben Sie eine richtige Pflege und eine gute, zweckmäßige Ernährung.

Benützen Sie Ihre Ferien
wenn Sie eine Diätkur oder eine gründliche Blutreinigungskur durchführen möchten. Bei uns haben Sie Ruhe, gute Luft und die Möglichkeit zu feinen Spaziergängen. Im Winter ist herrliche Gelegenheit für Ski Sport und wenn Sie hungrig nach Hause kommen, erhalten Sie eine natürliche, fein zubereitete Nahrung. Mollig warme Räume sorgen für angenehmes Wohnen, denn in allen Zimmern ist Zentralheizung. Im Sommer ist Gelegenheit zum Tauslaufen auf der großen Spielwiese.

**Einfach und natürlich
wie unsere Ernährung**
ist auch der Geist des Hauses und alle die ebenso empfinden, werden sich bei uns wohl fühlen und sofort daheim sein. Wer äußeren Schein liebt, wie ihn die Hotels bieten, der komme lieber nicht zu uns.

Sie bezahlen bei uns
inklusive fachmännische Beratung Fr. 7.50 pro Tag. In diesem Preise ist alles inbegriffen, außer speziellen Anwendungen und event. notwendigen Naturheilmitteln.

Für Kinder
verrechnen wir je nach Alter und Anforderungen Fr. 4.— bis Fr. 6.— pro Tag. Frühzeitige Anmeldung ist erwünscht, denn unser Kurheim ist klein und die Aufnahmemöglichkeit deshalb sehr beschränkt.

Diät-Kurhaus VOGEL, Trogen - Tel. 77

Fig. 7. Advertisement for the "Diätkurhaus Vogel" (Vogel Dietary Spa Hotel) (1935).

Naturärzte-Vereinigung der Schweiz
NEURÄRZTEVEREINIGUNG DER SCHWEIZ

Hörer-Bescheinigung
für **Herrn Alfred Vogel, Trogen**

X. Fach-Fortbildungskurs
vom 3. bis 5. November 1934 in Rottmannen-St. Gallen.

Samstag den 3. November:
Einführung in die praktische Herstellung der weitverbreiteten Naturheilmittel.
Referent: Herr O. Kay, Chaux-de-Fonds.

Sonntag den 4. November:
Anatomie und Physiologie. Referent: Herr Dr. med. Wagner aus Gösfigen.
Formen Therapie. Von Herrn Apollonier Spiez.

Montag den 5. November:
Anamnese und Diagnostik. Fortsetzung des Referates von Herrn Dr. med. Wagner.
Formen Therapie. Magen- und Darmkrankheiten. Praktische Verwendung in der Naturheilmethoden. Fortsetzung des Referates von Herrn Apotheker Spiez.
Herstellung von Naturheilmitteln und ihre Verwendung. Fortsetzung des Referates von Herrn O. Kay.

St. Gallen, den 5. November 1934.

Für den Vorstand: *[Signature]*
Die Referenten: *[Signatures]*

Fig. 8. NVS further training course for the production of naturopathic medicines (1934).

"Die Nahrung als Heilfaktor" [21] (*Food as a Factor in Healing*, 1935). It is an example of how easily he put together his religious belief in divine laws with the traditional and empiric knowledge of well-known naturopaths of his time (e.g. Berg, Bircher-Berner, Riedlin) and scientific aspects of physiologists at universities (e.g. Abderhalden, Chittenden, Hindehede, Voit).

Then, in September 1937, Vogel bought the "Hätschen" [1], a plot of land with an accompanying building. This property, at an altitude of 1000 m, is located in Teufen, also in the *Appenzeller Land*, in the immediate vicinity of St. Gallen. Here again he set up a "Kurheim Vogel" (*Spa Hotel Vogel*) in such a way that it provided accommo-

dation for his family as well as 15 cure guests (Fig. 10)⁸. In the brochure for the spa hotel, he explained what he understood as "naturopathic method": "diet ... physical therapy and the natural medicines, whether that means herbal remedies, homeopathy, biochemistry or loam and water treatment!". According to Vogel, these methods support "the healing power, which lies hidden in one's own body". But, he said, this power would depend on the "available resources still possessed by the sick body" and on obeying the natural laws. With the latter, he addressed to the self-responsibility of man. For a successful cure, he also considered an ambience of peace and quietness (i.e. no "jazz music or dancing"), "sleeping before midnight", abstinence from alcohol and cigarettes as important.⁸

On the mountain meadows adjacent to his spa hotel, Vogel himself was active in agriculture (Fig. 11 [2]) and grew fruits and vegetables for his guests,

as well as medicinal plants. In doing so, he adhered to the rules of organic farming, a subject upon which he also wrote, and acted as a consultant [23]. The decisive factor in Vogel's choice to pursue this course was that "our own biological farming enables us to put complete, vitamin-rich food on the table".⁸

Naturheilmittel sind Vertrauenssache
Leider wird viel als Naturheilmittel anempfohlen, das in den allopathischen Medizinkästen gehört, indem unter den Kräutern nicht unwesentliche Mengen von uns streng verurteilten Giften enthalten sind. Völlig unkundige haben sich besonders in letzter Zeit auf dieses Gebiet geworfen, und was da alles für verkehrte Dinge zu Stande kommen, kann man sich leicht selbst ausmalen.

Wenn Sie gut bedient sein möchten,
dann machen Sie sich die Erfahrungen von Herrn Vogel, dem Schreiber dieses Buches, zunutze, und verlangen Sie Naturheilmittel, die unter seiner Kontrolle hergestellt werden.

Für Naturheilmittel haben wir bis jetzt keine Depots und liefern alles direkt per Nachnahme. Wenden Sie sich bei Bedarf direkt an das

Laboratorium „Bioforce“ Trogen
Verlangen Sie unsere Preislisten und Prospekte.

Fig. 9. Advertisement "Bioforce Laboratory" naturopathic medicines (1935).

⁷ AAVGT, student certificate from NVS from 5th November 1934.

⁸ AAVGT, file on: Vogel Strategy Lectures, brochure for the "Kurheim Vogel" (*Vogel Spa Hotel*): Our health hotel, its task and its goal! (Without place or year [ca. 1940s]).



Fig. 10. "Kurheim Vogel" (Vogel Spa Hotel), Teufen (ca. 1950s).



Fig. 11. A. Vogel during haymaking in Teufen (ca. 1940s).

Over the years, herbal medicine and the production of herbal preparations became the preferred activities of Vogel. Due to this reason and his financial independence, he could cut down his therapeutic activity. From 1957 to 1982 for example, the naturopath Willi Reimelt took over the naturopathic practice in Teufen as well as the local production of herbal preparations [2].

Herbal medicine

Between 1942 and 1950, Vogel was able to set up a residential building and a bigger production building in Teufen [1] so that he could now extract fresh squeezed plant juices from medicinal herbs on a greater scale. His manufacturing of fresh plant juices was obviously based on two things: On the one hand his experience that squeezed juices from fresh plants seemed to work better than preparations made from the drug (dried medicinal plants) and on the other hand his religious believe that natural things made by the Creator were good and could be used for therapy. He concluded that nature "with its reactions, with its own healing power and natural medicines" offers a way which should be used by humans to support healing [24]. However, the idea to produce fresh squeezed plant juices was not unique to Vogel. Madaus stated for example that, in 1832, VOGT

wrote in his 'Textbook of Pharmacodynamics' about the preparation of "freshly squeezed herb juices" from different plants to be used as so-called "spring cures" (e.g. dandelion and fumitory herb to stimulate the gall bladder) [25, page 58]. Next to freshly squeezed plant juices, "full extracts" made from fresh plants by means of extractants like alcohol or water were well known in pharmacopoeias in the 1930s, like the "Homöopathisches Arzneibuch" (HAB, Homeopathic Pharmacopeia), and were also produced by companies such as Madaus or Schoenberger in Germany [ibid., page 304]. Vogel himself knew at this time that "fresh-plant preparations" were generally available in Switzerland [26]. However, it was his aim to establish his own production of fresh plant extracts. There is proof that since 1942 he had been offering "biological preparations, homeopathic tinctures and triturations" as well as his "speciality: fresh-plant extracts" (Fig. 12 [1,2]).

In 1953, Vogel founded the "A. Vogel Biologische Heilmittel GmbH" (A. Vogel Biological Remedies plc) in Teufen/Switzerland, and "Biosan GmbH" (Biosan plc) in Munich/Germany to produce and distribute natural, mostly herbal remedies [2]. The preparation of fresh-plant extracts became an almost identifying feature of Vogel's products like Crataegisan (full extract from the fresh plants *Crataegus*, *Cact. grand*, *Stroph.*, *Tinct. Val.*, *Camphora*, *Aurum natr. chlor*; Fig. 13), Bio-Echin (full extract of the fresh medicinal plant *Echinacea purp.*; Fig. 14) or Prostasan (full extracts of the fresh medicinal plants *Clematis recta*, *Petasitis*, *Visc. alb.*, *Curcubita* and *Populus*, *Paseira brava*, *Sabal serr.*, Fig. 15).⁹ Especially the former example shows that Vogel not only used plant extracts for his remedies but also minerals or essential oils.

Keeping step with the demand for his herbal preparations led to the



Fig. 12. Letterhead: "Speciality Fresh-Plant Extracts" (1942).



Fig. 13. Crataegisan – package of drops of a combination preparation from Vogel's company Biosan (ca. 1950s, photo: C. Kleemann).

tion on a tea lexicon with the physician R. F. Weiss, the pioneer of modern phytotherapy in German-speaking countries in the 20th century.

Travelling and ethno-botanic excursions

From 1958 on, that is after his active time as a therapist in Teufen, Vogel obviously felt drawn to distant places. His interest in medicinal plants in other cultures and continents, the customs and traditions of “primitive peoples” and the question whether indigenous peoples also would suffer from diseases of modern civilization took him to South, Central, and North America. In 1958, he actually acquired a farm in

sometimes ethno-botanic excursions, he published the book “Health Guide Through Southern Countries, Subtropics, Tropics and Desert Areas” [30] and some years later he summarized aspects on this topic in a book chapter, e.g. the use of *Cactus grandiflorus* as a “heart tonic” among the American Indians, yucca against arthritis and gout among Brazilian Indians, *Luffa purgans* in case of sinusitis in Colombia, *Carica papaya* for the treatment of intestinal parasites or of lapacho bark against “tumour diseases” in Uruguay [20].

Vogel continued to contribute to the adaptation of fresh-plant preparations in his company until the early 1990s although the development was mostly effected by pharmaceutical, medicinal and regulative standards. By founding the “A. Vogel-Stiftung” (*A. Vogel Foundation*), he created a basis to support and encourage research in herbal medicine, and since 1997 the “Alfred Vogel Prize” has been awarded annually.

Memberships and awards

Vogel's membership in the NVS (Swiss Association of Naturopaths) since 1933 has already been mentioned.

On an international level, he was a member of the “Internationale Gesellschaft für Nahrungs- und Vitalstoff-Forschung” (IVG) (*International Society for Research in Food and Vital Subs-*



Fig. 14. Bio-Echin – label of a herbal preparation, Biosan (ca. 1950s).



Fig. 15. Prostasan – label of a herbal combination preparation, Biosan (ca. 1950s).

foundation of the “Bioforce GmbH” in 1955 and the “Bioforce AG” (*Bioforce Ltd.*) in 1963 which then moved from Teufen to Roggwil/Thurgau into a new and modern building (Fig. 16).

The engagement in herbal medicine was not without effect on Vogel's self-image. From the 1970s on he spoke about “phytotherapy” [27, page 190] and later of himself as a “phytotherapist” [28]. His engagement for herbal medicine is also visible in the coopera-

Tarapoto (Peru) and worked for some time as a farmer [29, page 10]. After having sold the farm, he travelled through Central America and gave lectures on topics concerning naturopathy. During this time, he got to know the plant *Echinacea purpurea*, the purple coneflower which, so far, had been unknown to him. He himself said that the plant had been shown to him by the Sioux [2]. However, he must have received seeds as a gift from Indians and finally grew the purple coneflower in Teufen/Switzerland. Based on his



Fig. 16. New building of the Bioforce AG in Roggwil (1974).

⁹ AAVGT, Biosan.

tances). This rather right-wing conservative association was active in the fields of natural nutrition, protection of life and environmental protection [32]. How Vogel was influenced by the IVG became obvious in his remarks on nutrition when he used the terms "Vitalstoffe" (*vital substances*) and "vollwertige Kost" (*wholesome foods*) [33, pages 63–277] which had been coined by the IVG [32]. Nevertheless, he left the IVG in 1974.¹⁰

Some time thereafter, Vogel became member of the eclectic "International Academy of Biological Medicine" which was orientated towards alternative medicine and naturopathy and guided by the US-American physician Paavo Airola.

Vogel was well known as a non-physician therapist and phytotherapist in Germany and Switzerland. Therefore the "Deutsche Heilpraktikerschaft" (*German Society of Naturopathic Practitioners*) honoured him with the Prießnitz Medal in 1982. Then, in 1984, he became honorary member of the "Schweizer Ärztgesellschaft für Erfahrungsmedizin" (*SAGEM - Swiss Society of Physicians for Empirical Medicine*) [2].

Naturopath and charisma

Due to his activities as lecturer, writer, naturopath, phytotherapist, entrepreneur and businessman, Alfred Vogel preserved naturopathic traditions. Although he was active as a "lay physician" he was one of those naturopaths of the 20th century, like the physicians MAXIMILIAN BIRCHER-BENNER (1867–1939) or MAX OTTO BRUKER (1911–2001) [32], who show similar patterns of activity:

- Each of them became an exponent of naturopathic medicine, based on their positive experiences.
- For all of them nutrition was the main topic although they became elective users of other naturopathic treatments and founded their own institutions.
- In their support of naturopathy, an

intention to inform, instruct and educate clearly showed up with all the three, although it was partly derived from different motivations.

- Within the scope of their efforts for information on health and naturopathy, each of them founded a publishing house of his own, published a journal with articles that were comprehensible for laymen, and finally wrote and published his own books. In this way, their idea of educating people on health problems helped them to create circles of interested persons that later became subscribers or customers.

These points which Vogel, Bircher-Benner and Bruker had in common added to their image as being "charismatic naturopaths". Despite all common features, it would be hasty to assign them to a certain "type" of naturopaths. It is nevertheless striking how they combined their commitment to naturopathy with medicinal education and their own economic interests. This should not belittle their success with regard to the dissemination and passing on of naturopathic knowledge. However, it becomes obvious that the motivation for their activities did not spring from merely unselfish ideals but was diverse according to the interlinking in a complex and differentiated society.

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¹⁰AAVGT, file: correspondence from and to Dr. A. Vogel from 1st July, 1973, letter of 13th March 1974 from A. Vogel to S. Klein. Vogel resigned because he could no longer support "so much fuss and so little will".